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## Notes on Political Events and Personalities

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NOTE: The following contains

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1. Important, as an indication of the complete subservience of East German propaganda to Russian foreign policy as enunciated by Molotov at the Berlin Conference, is the establishment of an all-German economic and trade committee. This committee was formed upon the "request" of the national council of the National Front. It is alleged that on this 25-member committee there are 12 representatives from West Germany. Their names have not been revealed.
2. The main SED agitation line is the fight against the demand for free elections. The Frankfurt/Oder newspaper Neuer Tag of 5 February mentions that tumultuous debates took place at the Barnau Torpedowerk after the Frankfurt/Oder Bezirksleitung had issued plandiscussion directives. Since this mention of sharp debate amongst workers, no further mention of similar intense debate has been made in the East German press. However, [ ] information indicates that in several cases, specifically in an East Berlin metal-working plant, workers discussed and demanded the admission of the SPD as a prerequisite for free elections.
3. Although East Berlin workers looked forward to the Berlin Conference with pessimism, after three weeks of futile negotiations their outlook was reported to be one of complete hopelessness. The increased flow of refugees from East Berlin—in one day of the reported period the total was 175—cannot be ascribed to the relatively superficial and nonuniform controls at railroad check points but is caused by the return of deepest pessimism.
4. The most important event in SED affairs is the summoning of the 4th party congress for 30 March and the announcement of the congress agenda. Significant in this regard is that Wilhelm Pieck will only deliver a welcoming speech to the delegates, whereas the two main addresses are to be given by Walter Ulbricht and Karl Schirdewan. Ulbricht's speech will probably be the usual recount of party accomplishments in the field of government and industry; Schirdewan will probably include in his speech as the central item the suggestion to

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change party statutes. This is not surprising in that the entire schedule of events for the 4th party congress corresponds exactly to the schedule of events of the 19th party congress of the CPSU. As far back as April 1953, Schirdewan, in the name of the Central Committee, had broached the impending changes in party statutes. For the most part these proposed changes will concern revisions of party administrative procedures which have been put into effect already. They are (a) transfer of centralized administrative authority from the Land to the Bezirk level, (b) increased emphasis on the party cadre organizations in production plants (BFO) as the basic units, (c) simplification of dual administration between Bezirke and municipalities (Stadtbesirkeleitungen) and (d) probably the enunciation of the principle of collective responsibility. Questionable is whether, in line with the changes in the CPSU, the SED Politburo will be changed into a praesidium.

5. The Ulbricht speech will probably have to concern itself with the Dahlen, Harrnstadt, Zeisner cases. In any event, the probable main point of Ulbricht's speech will concern the German reunification question.
6. It is reported that by 30 March, the opening of the 4th party congress, 150,000 candidates for the SED are to be recruited.
7. It is worthy of note that very little coverage was given to the top party speakers at the conference of freie delegates, a third (80) of which have already met. Neues Deutschland of 10 February cites very little about these conferences and mentions in addition to Politburo members and Central Committee secretaries only a few other speakers such as Otto Schoen, Hermann Axen, Willi Rumpf, Hanna Wolf, and a certain Otto Heckert. These top party functionaries were committed in particularly "difficult" (heisse) areas; Schirdewan in Altenburg, Rumpf and Axen in Berlin-Friedrichshagen, Hanna Wolf in Mansfeld, and Heckert in Zittau. These are "difficult" areas in that either the party work there has been the subject of constant criticism or that "weaknesses" were observed there during the 17 June revolt.
8. Neues Deutschland of 13 February lists, among the top party cultural functionaries attending the Kulturbund congress, Alfred Kurella as residing in Berlin. Kurella has up to now been active in the Moscow emigration.

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